

**GE-Pittsfield Citizen's Coordinating Council
Berkshire Community College
Susan B. Anthony Center**

**Meeting Highlights
May 12, 1999**

Prepared by the Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution.

Participants

38 members and alternates of the CCC were present. There were people 29 in the audience.

Welcome and Agenda Review

Jane greeted all. CCC introduced themselves. Mike Carroll introduced himself and noted that he will be representing General Electric. Jane McGee has moved to another position at GE in New York State.

Jane provided overview of how meeting would be conducted. She noted that the purpose of the meeting was to provide information on the proposal for interim work at the Allendale School and the upper ½ mile reach of the Housatonic River in Pittsfield, MA and for EPA and GE to hear comment on the proposal. The CCC agreed to encourage the public to speak after the CCC commented.

Presentation: *Proposal for Implementation of Work at the Allendale School and the Upper ½ Mile of the Housatonic River in Pittsfield, MA.*

Angela Bonarrigo of EPA -Public Process: Public comment period will be from May 5, 1999 to June 4, 1999. People can comment tonight or later by fax, email or phone to Bryan Olson of EPA. A public meeting will be held on May 12, 1999 at Pittsfield City Hall. There will also be opportunities for people to discuss directly with EPA if they desire to- contact Bryan Olson if interested. At the conclusion of the comment period, EPA will write a brief response summary and put it in the repositories. Concerns will be incorporated into the design process.

Bryan Olson of EPA— have already received a number of comments. Previously submitted written comments on ½ mile will be responded to as part of this comment period.

Review of Original Agreement in Principle.

3 components: remediation, restoration, and redevelopment. Two of the goals for the summer in the agreement are to complete the Allendale School and start work on the first ½ mile of the river.

Process is still to complete all 3 formal/legal steps to implement the Consent Decree (CD) namely; 1) finish negotiations and have all parties sign the consent decree, 2) submit the CD to the court with public and agency review comments. Judge reviews comments and decides if it is in the public interest to approve 3) then Judge approves/disapproves- decision made “official”. If approved, CD then becomes legally binding and GE must move forward with implementation. This legal process is called 1) signing, 2) lodging, and entry. **GE has agreed to start some work after lodging rather than after entry; this is the proposal being discussed tonight.** In order to start this work by the summer; the Consent Decree must be signed within the next 6 weeks. The CD will be a major document – likely thousands of pages.

Interim Agreement Proposal (tonight’s topic)

Overview

1. Cleanup of Allendale School, no averaging. Will remove anything more than 2 PPM. Essentially remove all contaminated soil in there since 1850s. Have been talking to Allendale School Council and Mike McCarthy. Issues include drainage, convenience to neighborhood, dust control, trucking schedule or other ways to transport w/o going through neighborhood, how to isolate work from neighborhood.
2. Start work on first ½ mile of river.
3. On-plant consolidation.
3 areas designated for material, Hill 78, requires minimal preparation, Building 71 requires more preparation, including installation of liner. A third area was identified for possible future use, but no plans to use it for now.

John Novotny of GE

GE On-site Consolidations

(Brian mentioned John’s good job on residential fill properties)

Looked at 12-14 areas at plant site initially – screened to 8 areas in Conceptual Work Plan presented to Agencies; then screened down to 3 areas: At Hill 78, Bldg. 71, intersection New York Ave. and Merrill Road.

Explained locations of areas and where they will be placing materials from Allendale School and ½ mile.

Hill 78 requires very little preparation. Bldg. 71 will have liner. Both areas will have double layer of HDPE (high-density polyethylene) on top of consolidated materials. Sealed layers.

Surface water will be drained away by surface drainage swales and existing drainage systems.

Will monitor for dust. Have contingency plan using water to suppress dust.

Dean Tagliaferro of EPA

½ Mile of River

Work deals with river channel and banks but not any adjacent areas – Newell Street Stretch.

GE submitted Conceptual Plan July 1998, Approved Aug 1998 then GE submitted workplan Jan. 1999.

2 public meetings were held in February. Summary of public comments and questions received at the meetings as follows:

1. Geotextile not necessary. Agencies agree not necessary on banks but necessary in channel to maintain long-term integrity of cap.
2. Long-term monitoring: Agencies agree it is necessary to ensure integrity of cap, stability of banking, and restoration of habitat.
3. Other contaminants: Will be no need after work to revisit area to address these compounds.
4. Indigenous tree selection: plan modified to address this.

Still discussing cap & armor & stability after restoration. Want to ensure long term effectiveness of cap in isolating contamination.

½ mile plan does not address source control & additional sources of contamination. However GE has submitted 10 or 11 documents since last summer to address source control – in public repositories.

Source Control – sheet piling will be placed below water surface to supplement extraction – East St II.

Bldg. 68 area completed as of last January.

Newell St.- oil well below bed of river. Installing additional extraction wells in January 1999 and June/July 1999.

Lyman St. Parking Lot – does not need to be completed prior to beginning ½ mile work. Both deep and shallow oil. Final design due July 1999.

CCC Questions

1. Chamber of Commerce representative statement – comments received acknowledge the importance of how the negotiated settlement will allow the city to move forward. Noted importance of redeveloping the GE site. Constructive comments of CCC over past 7 months achieved momentum. Acknowledged efforts of government. Applauded pushing forward with plan so as to not to miss

out on 1999 construction season, EPA sampling efforts, on-site consolidation, etc. Environmental experts at EPA will ensure proper design of consolidation areas.

2. Request for information on volumes and concentrations of contaminants in consolidation areas.
Bryan – no liner where landfill already exists (Hill 78)– so will place only low – level wastes there. Difficult to regulate volumes; easier to develop configuration that will be aesthetically pleasing i.e. not too high, etc. NRD Trustees have asked for land habitat on top – EPA supports this. Bldg. 71 – no liquids, drums, capacitors etc. will be placed there. Only soils that are contaminated to a point they are regulated (for PCBs > 50ppm). Moving the 2 mounds together (with physical separation of liner) creates an area much lower than if there were 2 separate mounds.
3. Will people be allowed to do activities on top of the mounds? Any restrictions?
Bryan – Trying to keep natural vegetation on top, so playground wouldn't be good because it could encourage erosion, although it would be safe to walk on it from a risk standpoint. Will be most useful as a bird habitat.
4. Did Allendale Cap fail?
Bryan – cap still working and safe, but better to remove and GE agreed. 1998 sampling outside cap – showed elevated levels. Bryan clarified – 0-2 ft in that report was referring to levels below the cap. Don't want mowed grass on landfills – need habitat; will be glad to accept species list recommended by local experts.
5. Confused about public input process; want to see scientific justification for capping so can comment on it. Lots of public comment and even Army Corps of Engineers representative said it wasn't necessary. Not done anywhere else in country. Why have you retained capping?
Bryan – not just capping, lots of excavation and backfill; capping only to isolate residuals. Not all capping – many areas without cap, many areas will have no work done because they are clean. At industrial area – trying to isolate contamination in industrial area. All design specs/equations, etc. will be provided in final proposal. Design to address erosion, the damage etc.
6. Newell St. and other source control areas. What monitoring is proposed? How can you be sure that no leakage has or will occur?
Bryan – no sheet pile needed at Newell St. because of depth – 30ft below river. Sampling done at other areas – no significant levels of PCBs or other materials coming into river (at upstream edge).
Dean – Newell St, heavy oil is not necessarily a new plume. It is the tail end of existing plume. Automated pumps installed to remove that oil. Monitoring at both ends of sheet pile; piling designed/modified for environmental use. Additional information or details are available in repositories. There will be another report that will address final extent of plume.
Bryan – if we don't finish source control will have to delay river cleanup.

7. Statement by Allendale School Council – GE is going above and beyond what would be required by CD and regulation. Outlined improvements.
8. Real estate market has stabilized. People are buying this year rather than renting. Lots of sites in Lakewood since settlement.

Audience Comments

1. Will Hill 78 be monitored before materials are placed there?
Bryan – There will be baseline monitoring at both locations. But at Hill 78, not putting a barrier between existing and added materials makes sense. But will monitor to ensure no problems from work.
2. Comment: Concerned about high levels of PCBs already found in current landfill.
Bryan – acknowledges high levels PCBs – but has been monitored for a number of years and no problems. Expect situation to improve with cap.
3. Will removal of PCBs at Allendale create new problems? Why was decision made to consolidate > 50ppm materials onsite rather than transport to other landfills? Doesn't make sense?
Bryan – Remediation issues is dust control to prevent off – site migration. Engineering will take care of that. Decision to consolidate is general practice on large industrial sites like this. Raymark, Loring Air Force Base, Norwood, etc. PCBs don't tend to migrate like other chemicals since unlikely to dissolve in water even if water gets in landfill.
4. Russ Cohen, MA Department of Fisheries and Wildlife – suggest students are involved in revegetation of landfill and allowed to go in and study birds and butterflies. Pointed out filling of oxbows and concerns for high levels of PCB's there. Understands need to keep river in current channel but disappointed oxbows not being restored – separate habitat with different species and doesn't want this to be trend for rest of river – want to reestablish natural flood plain habitat.
Tom O'Brien – this is hazardous waste site – limited by needed protection from contamination. Hope to get meaningful habitat enhancement and restoration as they move down river.
5. Wants clarification on current proposals and what will happen as work moves down the river. Don't want recontamination as a result of work. Had proposal to divert river to separate concrete channel.
Dean – looked at that but not feasible. Sheet pile achieves same result of excavation in the dry area next to river. We wanted more natural solution than concrete channel. 1986 proposal was to channelize the southern portion of river.

6. How high will the landfills be?
EPA - 3:1 slope on sides. Top of landfill will be 4 % slope to allow water to run off. Hill 78 will be 11 acres at base, 20' high at center, top is probably 2/3 of base diameter.
7. How to determine if a hole develops in the liner? How will the cap be tested?
Concerned about the effects of forest succession on cap. How will it all be monitored? Will treatment of PCB material be an option in the future?
EPA- Top of landfill will have smooth material, sides will be textured. People will monitor cap and physically remove tree seedlings. There would be a leachate monitoring and collection system – would indicate if a hole develops. Do not plan to treat material but future treatment will not be precluded. May be able to separate different levels of contamination and put in different sections of landfill. Hi and low concentrations will not be mixed.
8. Comment: Important to keep settlement on track; public process is working.
9. What is need for geotextile in river?
EPA - Much of original plan for use of material has been eliminated. Some will be used in places like banks. Mesh allows water flow but keeps silt from flowing up through armor.

DEP, as promised at previous meeting, passed out report on new developments and results at Pittsfield Landfill – call Lynn Cutler for more information.

EPA reminded everyone of the public meeting on Interim Agreement Proposal to be held on May 10, 1999 at the Pittsfield City Hall.

Next CCC meeting will be on June 2, 1999 at the Berkshire Community College. All agreed to hold meetings there until further notice.